

II. DNR staff and volunteer positions

Volunteers started to become more involved in the State Natural Areas Program in 2011 as a result of discussions of how to multiply program efforts. Since not all volunteers have the same knowledge, time, or interest they will have the opportunity to commit themselves at a level they see fit. The different volunteer commitments, from least to most, are: volunteer, apprentice steward, and steward. The relationship of DNR staff and volunteer positions is found in Figure 1.

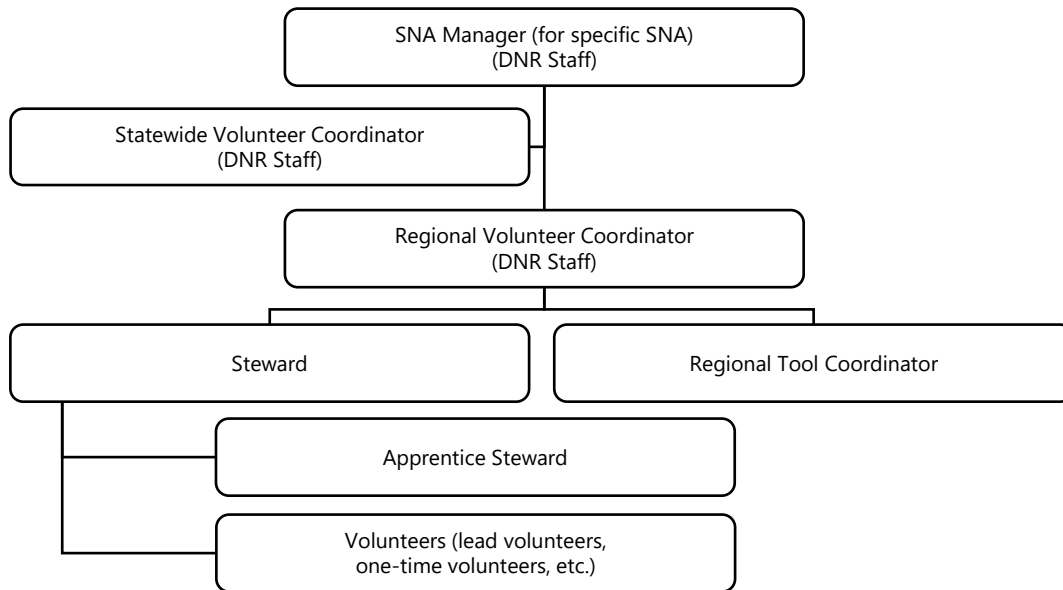


Figure 1. Basic organizational structure of the people involved with the SNA Volunteer Program.

A. Volunteers

The volunteers involved with the program range from individuals who show up once to those who return for twenty years. In the process of volunteering, individuals may gain enough experience and interest to emerge as leaders. Their experience and interest may lead to becoming a workday leader, apprentice steward, or steward. While some volunteers may become more involved, others may get busy elsewhere or decide the program is not for them. The program allows volunteers to come and go naturally as their interest, time, and personal life allow.

Participating in a workday is one of the main ways new or inexperienced volunteers can join the program. It is the least length of commitment, but workday volunteers donate a valuable amount of program hours. They would be the target audience for workday advertising. Anyone could come for a day to try different tasks, at different times of the year, or at various sites to see if the work is a good fit. Workday volunteers get the opportunity to learn, get exercise, socialize, and explore new places. They are trained on site by the workday leader.

A volunteer who is regularly involved in the program could become a lead volunteer. Solo volunteers and workday leaders would all fall under this category. The workday leader is a lead volunteer who leads or helps lead workdays.

at a State Natural Area (SNA). Workday leaders are volunteers who have enough experience and training to lead a group of people to accomplish a task. Workday leaders do not need to be stewards but need to work with the steward to do projects that fit with the yearly management objectives (see [Section IV, A](#), “Yearly Management Objectives”). Workday leaders must follow appropriate guidance and gain permission to lead workdays from a steward, a regional volunteer coordinator, or an SNA manager. See [Section V](#), “Coordinating Workdays” for more information and guidance. All lead volunteers must fill out the Lead Volunteer Application and Permit (see [Appendix D](#)). They will have a form that covers their work for several years and be contacted when volunteer appreciation picnics occur. Becoming a lead volunteer is a logical first step towards being more involved in the program.

B. Apprentice Steward

Apprentice steward is a volunteer position that learns about and performs native plant community restoration on an assigned SNA. This is a learning position, so volunteers with little experience but available interest and time are welcome. Volunteers commit to a minimum of one year, with the goal of becoming a steward or co-steward in 1-3 years. This commitment includes 40 hours of volunteer time and 10 hours training that is funded by the program and could include: herbicide certification, chainsaw safety course, prescribed burn training, First Aid/CPR, etc. They will work closely with the experienced steward to learn how to perform native plant community restoration duties and develop management priorities. The apprentice steward will have opportunities to work independently as well as with others, take on new projects, meet interesting people, and discover the unique challenges presented by restoration activities. Apprentice steward positions are created when an experienced steward is in favor of training an apprentice. Available positions are advertised, and interested volunteers can submit a letter of interest via email or mail to the regional volunteer coordinator including any relevant skills and qualifications, why they are interested in the position, and for which site or sites they would like to become the apprentice steward. After a year, the regional volunteer coordinator and steward will determine if the person is ready to become a steward or co-steward. See [Appendix K](#) for an example.

C. Steward

A steward is an important volunteer position within the program and crucial to its success. The steward could be an individual or a team of leader(s) of an organized group. They are the contact for all volunteer activities at the corresponding SNA. They coordinate volunteer work, organize workdays, make management decisions based on discussions with the regional volunteer coordinator/SNA manager, evaluate success, and communicate with the public. In order to become a steward, the volunteer or group must demonstrate a lifelong learning approach to restoration, an interest in SNAs, commitment to the SNA volunteer program, and basic experience. There are several routes to becoming a steward, including one of the following:

- Volunteer has attended 5-10 workdays in addition to completing appropriate training such as herbicide certification, chainsaw safety, prescribed burn training, First Aid/CPR, etc.
- Volunteer has been an apprentice steward for one year.
- Volunteer has demonstrated equivalent experience/education with another organization and provides a reference.
- An organized group that has one or more members who have met the above criteria.

To begin the process, a volunteer opportunity will be posted. The volunteer or experienced volunteers from an organized group must submit a letter of interest via email or mail including any relevant skills and qualifications, why they are interested in the position, and at which site(s) they would like to become the steward. The SNA manager and regional volunteer coordinator will conduct an interview or conversation to evaluate if the volunteer(s) are a good fit for the steward position and which site(s) would match their interests. When signed on, the steward(s) will be given the position description in [Appendix J](#) that describes their duties.

The steward(s) supports the SNA program by implementing management objectives and maintaining a relationship with the SNA manager and/or regional volunteer coordinator. This may include, but is not limited to: communicating and meeting with the SNA manager/regional volunteer coordinator; completing appropriate training; completing necessary forms; invasive species management (pulling, brushcutting, herbiciding, chainsawing, collecting seed, mowing, monitoring, etc.); record keeping and reporting; maintaining knowledge of relevant safety practices; organizing workdays; and completing yearly management objectives. For a position description see [Appendix J](#).

Depending on the steward(s), workdays may be the main way to accomplish tasks. If the steward(s) has limited time but interested volunteers, workdays might be a great way to get tasks accomplished efficiently. Holding regular, intentional workdays is the best way to determine who the core group is and find new volunteers. See [Section V](#), “Coordinating Workdays” for more information and guidance.

D. Regional Tool Coordinator

The regional tool coordinator takes responsibility for the tools in an area. Tool locations will be determined based on need and centrality. The tool coordinator handles regular maintenance, repairs, reservations, and new tool requests. They periodically make sure the tools are in their proper place and in good working order. The responsibilities of this position can be handled by a DNR staff person or a volunteer.

E. Regional Volunteer Coordinator

The regional volunteer coordinator is the main DNR staff contact for volunteers within a region. This person will be assigned for all properties in their region with active volunteers. The regional volunteer coordinator is responsible for maintaining a good relationship with volunteers by:

- Answering questions
- Meeting with volunteers once a year to determine yearly management objectives
- Provide coaching when appropriate
- Forward funding and equipment requests to statewide volunteer coordinator (or handle independently)
- Keep track of forms, submitting them once annually to statewide volunteer coordinator
- Once annually requesting accurate log information from volunteers
- Represent the program in the region
- Look for ways to engage volunteer talents
- Once annually distribute tokens of volunteer appreciation including hats and t-shirts

Ideally, the regional volunteer coordinator would look for ways to provide all volunteers with opportunities for advancement, training, and appreciation. The coordinator communicates with the SNA manager when management decisions are being discussed with volunteers.

The staff member who fills the regional volunteer coordinator role depends on the site, but this will be determined within the DNR and communicated to the volunteers. The staff member could be a field crew member, SNA volunteer coordinator, or SNA manager.

F. Statewide Volunteer Coordinator

The statewide volunteer coordinator is responsible for advancing the mission of the volunteer program by looking for ways to assist current staff and volunteers. Depending on the stage of the program, they could take on the role of regional volunteer coordinator as needed. This is the point person responsible for the future vision of the program. Tasks include:

- Organizing workdays
- Posting workdays
- Providing trainings
- Recruiting volunteers
- Compiling statistics on the program
- Applying for grants
- Forging new partnerships
- Connecting groups
- Identifying needs
- Updating the website
- Coaching coordinators and volunteers
- Updating forms
- Addressing problems
- Volunteer appreciation

The statewide volunteer coordinator works primarily with the SNA manager and regional volunteer coordinators but could also work on important projects in the state.

G. SNA Manager

The SNA manager is the staff member designated by the DNR to manage the specific SNA and may be known within the DNR as the property manager. On stand-alone SNAs (SNAs not embedded in a state park, forest, wildlife area, or in federal or private property), this person will usually be the regional ecologist. If an SNA is embedded within another DNR owned property, the SNA manager could either be the district ecologist or the manager of the property upon which the SNA is designated (e.g., state park superintendent or wildlife biologist). They have the final say in decisions made on SNAs and will be kept informed of volunteer activity by the regional volunteer coordinator. They

may wish to take a greater or lesser role in managing volunteers depending on expertise and availability of the regional volunteer coordinator. If not already determined, the SNA manager will either designate a regional volunteer coordinator or take on the role of the regional volunteer coordinator for a specific SNA.

The SNA manager and/or regional volunteer coordinator help develop management objectives with the steward on a designated SNA. The SNA manager and/or regional volunteer coordinator support the steward by offering appropriate resources. This may include, but is not limited to, meeting with the steward to determine yearly management objectives, providing equipment as able (sprayers, brushcutters, herbicide, chainsaws, etc.), providing opportunities for training and materials as able, and periodic check-ins during the work season.